

Excerpt  
*Conclusion*

AMERICAN SPACES

Idea Book

Message from the  
Under Secretary

Message from the  
Program Director

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**Tara D. Sonenshine**

*Under Secretary for Public  
Diplomacy and Public Affairs*

In a rapidly changing world, powered by social media and instant information, the United States must continue to be part of the world's vibrant conversations. At a time when so many of our embassies are forced by necessity to protect our diplomats, it's critical that we can go outside our compounds to engage in what Edward R. Murrow called "the last three feet—one person talking to another."

I have prioritized American Spaces as one of the most effective and vibrant forums for our public diplomacy outreach. Since the beginning of my tenure as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs I have seen exciting learning taking place in Information Resource Centers, American Centers, Bi-national Centers, and Corners where foreign audiences come to engage with us on matters of common interest.

Just as traditional libraries are evolving into dynamic community spaces, our American Spaces must be dynamic as well. Over the course of the last year many people have come together, from all over the world, to work on this idea of creating Model American spaces to showcase the types of dynamic learning centers we hope all our spaces will become.

Since we began this project our vision has been clear: to further develop American Spaces that engage audiences with compelling learning environments that reflect the dynamic nature of the United States and welcome spontaneous interaction, shared ideas and warm conversations. We have

made it our goal to provide what I call CARE for every Space: Content, Access, Resources, Evaluation and robust connectivity.

Working with experts from the Smithsonian, we have created an exciting partnership to realize that vision—and take it to the next level: advancing the role of American Spaces as symbols of meaningful relationships and commitments between the U.S. and host communities.

Through this Idea Book we will provide Posts the means to improve and standardize the quality of American Spaces and their core programs. Our aim is to provide the best multifunctional platform for public diplomacy programs to promote open dialogue, counteract negative preconceptions and build bridges of understanding. Bringing our partners and Smithsonian experts together we anticipated an explosion of ideas and practical solutions, and we had just that.

We hope you will use this Idea Book as a resource to invigorate your Spaces which are, now more than ever, one of our key platforms for advancing U.S. foreign policy through the lively sharing of information and ideas. Flexible spaces, welcoming environments and state-of-the art technology can help create opportunities for learning about America, through participatory experience, casual exchanges, and social media, breaking down barriers around the world.



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# Message from the Under Secretary



**Elizabeth Duggal**

*Director, International Museum  
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*Photo Credit: James DiLoreto,  
Smithsonian Institution*

The Smithsonian is pleased to submit this Idea Book as the final deliverable of our American Spaces Assessment and Redesign Project. We hope it will serve as a guide for all American Spaces eager to refresh their facilities with a new look and new content for use by their visitors. The Idea Book contains design concepts, finishes and furnishings, and programming and IT/social media recommendations, supported by narratives explaining how our recommendations might be implemented in different types of American Spaces.

American Spaces, from my perspective, are terrific assets for this country and offer enormous opportunity. It is a great privilege for the Smithsonian to work with all of you on this important and vital project, particularly because our mission is the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.” We are passionate about engaging our visitors and our role in the world of cultural diplomacy.

From the initial discussions with State to the team visits to the American Spaces, from the design efforts to the planning and convening of the project workshop, this has been a wonderful and rewarding partnership all around. Collaboration and shared commitment have been central to this project: when our delegations visited the American Spaces

and peer institutions around the world and met with Embassy and American Spaces staff, partners, and visitors, all were unstinting in their generous contributions to the project. All of these stakeholders are key to the success of this endeavor, and ownership of the final recommendations will be in the hands of the American Spaces themselves.

We have benefited greatly from the support of our State Department partners throughout. Our ideas have been strengthened through communication and feedback, and we have all learned so much from you. On behalf of the entire International Museum Professional Education Program team and the broader Smithsonian Institution, we want to thank the State Department—particularly the Bureau of International Information Programs—for the opportunity to work on this project. Members from several Smithsonian Institution units have enthusiastically participated in the program, drawing expertise from the National Museum of Natural History, the National Museum of American History, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), and the Office of Facilities Engineering and Operations. We look forward to the possibilities ahead and to continuing this partnership and supporting you in any way we can.



# Message from the Program Director



Conclusion

We hope you have found  
this Idea Book helpful.  
Your dedication and  
commitment help make  
American Spaces the  
vital places they are.

The Office of American Spaces is always happy to hear from you and can be reached via email at [AmericanSpaces@state.gov](mailto:AmericanSpaces@state.gov). We look forward to hearing about your programs and activities, answering your questions, and supporting your efforts.

The collaboration between IIP and SI was natural—there is a real alignment of missions that creates great synergy. We are both interested in creating ongoing relationships with audiences, and we do that with “physical and virtual places”—IIP with American Spaces, SI with museums and libraries, and all of us with the digital infrastructure we build around them.

IIP programs engage international audiences in sustained, meaningful interaction on the full spectrum of U.S. policy objectives, intersecting innovation, policy, and public diplomacy. American Spaces are a key tool for IIP in building mutual understanding between Americans and international audiences, and they exemplify the U.S. commitment to a core tenet of democracy: the citizen’s right to free access to information. The Smithsonian’s mission is the “increase and diffusion of knowledge.” As a global institution with ongoing research and partnerships in over 100 countries, we do that through our museums, research centers, the national zoo, our affiliates, and of course through the programming and outreach of all these entities. We look forward to continuing this fruitful relationship and collaborating on meaningful initiatives.



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## Closing Remarks

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